

**What is pneumonia?**

Pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection. Infection of the lungs often occurs after an infection that starts in the nose and throat area spreads to the lungs.

Who is at risk for pneumonia?

Children age 6 to 23 months and people older than 65 are at high risk for pneumonia, but pneumonia can affect anyone.

What are the symptoms of pneumonia?

Symptoms may include cough, difficult breathing, fever, muscle aches, loss of appetite and lethargy.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Pneumonia can be caused by a variety of germs; therefore, the appearance of symptoms will depend on the germ causing the pneumonia.

How is pneumonia spread?

This will depend on the type of germ causing the pneumonia, but usually pneumonia is not spread easily from person to person. Check with your health-care provider for germ-specific information.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

The germ that is causing the pneumonia can spread if the person is still infectious at the time the pneumonia develops. Most of the germs that cause pneumonia are spread by direct or close contact with mouth and nose secretions and touching contaminated objects.

How is a person diagnosed?

This will depend on the germ that caused the pneumonia. If you have questions, consult a health-care professional.

What is the treatment?

Antibiotics will not work against viruses, so treatment may consist of bed rest, drinking more than the usual amount of liquids and taking pain relievers to help reduce discomfort. If the pneumonia is caused by a bacteria, however, your doctor may decide to treat you with an antibiotic.

Consult a health-care professional for treatment recommendations.

Does past infection make a person immune?

Because many different germs can cause pneumonia, people are able to get pneumonia more than once.

Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have pneumonia?

No. Infants, toddlers and school-age children should not be excluded unless the staff determines the child is unwilling or unable to participate in activities.

They also should be excluded if the staff determines that they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group.

What can be done to prevent the spread of pneumonia disease?

Use good hand washing techniques. Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing with a disposable facial tissue and immediately throw the tissue in the garbage. People in group settings should change or cover contaminated clothing and wash their hands right after using facial tissues or having contact with mucus to prevent the spread of disease by contaminated hands. Sanitize surfaces that are touched by hands frequently, such as toys, tables and doorknobs.

For more information on the pneumonia vaccine, see the fact sheet for *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resource: American Academy of Pediatrics. In: Pickering LK, ed. *Red Book: 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 26th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2003:[123-130]

